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**FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS “EL PECHO de ORO” OF COMMITTING
THREE SAN ANTONIO DRUG-RELATED MURDERS**

(SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS) This afternoon, a federal jury convicted the ringleader of a massive drug trafficking organization based in San Antonio on 27 counts which included charges of murder, drug distribution, and money laundering. As a result, 35-year-old **HUGO VILLARREAL-SOLIS**, a.k.a. “El Pecho de Oro” or “Chest of Gold,” faces up to life in federal prison.

In addition, the jury convicted two of his co-defendants—22-year-old **JOSE ABEL RODRIGUEZ** and 31-year-old **ROBERTO LOPEZ RIVERA** a.k.a. “Raton” or “Rat” on three charges of murder in furtherance of the drug distribution conspiracy. Rodriguez and Rivera, who were hired assassins for the Villareal-Solis organization, both face up to life in Federal prison. Sentencing is scheduled for 10:00am on May 31, 2002, before U.S. District Judge Fred Biery.

From 1992 to 2000, members of the marijuana conspiracy imported, transported and distributed more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana in San Antonio, Atlanta, Georgia and elsewhere. Villareal-Solis organized the importation from Mexico, transportation, storage, and distribution of more than 10,000 pounds of marijuana during the eight-year period. The defendants used commercial tractor trailers, rental cars, private vehicles, and commercial bus lines to transport their marijuana. Evidence presented at trial also revealed that the defendants conducted various financial transactions in an effort to conceal the source of the drug proceeds and to promote further drug trafficking.

Villareal-Solis and Rodriguez were convicted of the February 28, 1997, murders of Jorge Ruvalcaba and Cesar Blake. Ruvalcaba and Blake were killed as they sat in a car outside the Copa Cabana Night Club on South Zarzamora in San Antonio. Villareal-Solis, through his subordinates, solicited Rodriguez and Guillermo Recio to murder Ruvalcaba. Ruvalcaba died immediately and Blake died after being transported to a nearby hospital. Guillermo Recio was himself murdered in a drive-by shooting in San Antonio on November 29, 1998.

Villareal-Solis and Rivera were convicted of the July 6, 2000, murder of Idelfonso “Poncho” Chavarria in San Antonio. The jury found that Villareal-Solis solicited Lopez Rivera to murder Chavarria and that Rivera committed the murder using a .45 caliber weapon.

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In addition, the jury granted the forfeiture of proceeds of Villarreal-Solis' criminal activity including, but not limited to: 1) the residence and property located at 2749 Oaks Island Drive in San Antonio; 2) the residence and property located at 244 Rolling Oaks Lane in San Antonio; 3) \$98,986.26 in his bank account; and 4) approximately \$6,795 in jewelry, including a gold pendant bearing the name "El Pecho de Oro," and gold coins seized from a safety deposit box.

This case was the result of a lengthy cooperative investigative effort among: the San Antonio Police Department Patrol, Narcotics and Homicide Divisions; Texas Department of Public Safety Special Crimes Division; Drug Enforcement Administration; Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation; United States Customs Service, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; Texas National Guard; Immigration and Naturalization Service; and other federal, state and local agencies. Assistant United States Attorneys Jason Davis, Joey Contreras, and Sam Ponder are prosecuted this case on behalf of the Government.

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